DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 250 038 JC 840 574

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TITLE Opinions of Strategic Constituencies Regarding Community College Activities at Maricopa and Central Arizona College.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; College Programs; *College Role; Community Colleges; Educational Responsibility; Governing Boards; Legislators; *Public Opinion; *School Support; State Officials; Surveys; *Tax Effort; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Central Arizona College AZ; *Maricopa Community Colleges AZ

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to compare the priorities of college administrators with those of strategic external constituencies regarding the activities of the Maricopa Community Colleges and Central Arizona College. The strategic constituencies for the colleges were defined as all 90 state legislators, 21 state board members and staff, and a sample of registered voters from each county since these groups interact to determine fiscal resources. These groups were sent a survey asking if each of 60 activities was "important to do" and whether it should be "funded with tax dollars." Survey responses were weighted according to the perceived political power of the constituencies to establish a set of opinions for the urban district and a set for the rural district. Study findings, based on a comparison of the administrator and constituency responses, revealed 27 important differences of opinion for Maricopa and 26 differences for Central Arizona College. Selected results include the following: (1) the strategic constituencies gave significantly less support to credit courses and programs in the arts and sciences for personal development than the administrators; (2) strategic groups for Maricopa attributed greater importance and advocated tax support for basic skills instruction more than the administrators; and (3) in contrast to the administrators, strategic groups were opposed to providing tax support for programs for non-high school graduates. (HB)

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OPINIONS OF STRATECIC CONSTITUENCIES REGARDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACTIVITIES AT MARICOPA AND CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE

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JC 840 574

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Opinions of Strategic Constituences Regarding Community College Activities at Maricopa and Central Arizona College

This summary highlights the major findings from a study that compared priorities of administrators for community college activities with those of strategic external constituencies. The following description includes purposes of the study, method, and major findings.

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assist community college presidents, board members and policy makers by providing information helpful to strategic planning. As distinct from institutional planning, strategic planning recognizes the political, public nature of community colleges. As such, community colleges are not autonomous but rely on others for the resources necessary for institutional survival. These "others" are usually external constituencies such as legislators and state governing boards; so called "strategic" since **they** rather than the college ultimately control funding decisions.

This study assessed opinions of external constituencies and contrasted them with those held by administrators who direct the activities of community colleges. The following briefly describes how opinions were assessed.

Method

The strategic constituencies for Maricopa Community Colleges and Central Arizona College were defined as all 90 state legislators, 21 state board members and staff, and a sample of registered voters selected from each county since these groups interact to determine fiscal resources. These groups were sent a survey asking if each of sixty activities was "important to do" and whether it should be "funded with tax dollars". The responses of these strategic constituencies were rated according to their perceived political power by administrators in Pinal and Maricopa counties. These weights were used in combining the set of opinions of the strategic constituencies for the urban and the set for the rural district. All administrators from each district were given the survey. Answers from administrators in the two districts were used to make the comparisons.

Major Findings

The responses of administrators were compared with their respective constituencies using rank ordering and analysis of variance. There were 27 important differences of opinions for Maricopa and 26 for Central. To assist in the discussion of differences, the activities were clustered into twelve major categories or missions plus a group of unclassified activities. A highlight of major findings is displayed in the attached table.

Mission 1: Associate Degree Programs

The strategic constituencies gave significantly less support to **credit courses and programs in the arts and sciences for personal development** than did administrators. Credit courses and programs are supported by both urban and rural constituencies for transfer or occupational purposes but not for **personal development**.

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Maricopa District and Central Arizona College Activities with Most Important Differences

The left column in this table lists twelve missions and a category of unclassified activities as identified by the Mission Study for Arizona community colleges. Within each mission is found an activity (ies) which contain most important differences between the strategic constituencies and administrators. The nature of these differences in terms of importance to strategic constituencies and if they should be funded with tax dollars is explained for Maricopa in the middle column and for Central in the column to the right. Lesser differences and areas of consensus are labelled, "not an issue".

Missions & Activities	Strategic Groups' Opinions vs. Administrators	
	MCCD	CAC
MISSION 1: Associate Degree Programs		
38 Credit courses and programs in the arts and sciences for personal development.	Same importance, NO tax dollar support	Same importance, NO tax dollars support
MISSION 2: Entry-Level Vocational		
48 Credit courses and programs in hospitality services.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	not an issue
MISSION 3: Special Services and Programs for High Ability Students		
7 Scholarships and financial assistance to students of high academic ability.	same importance, NO tax dollar support	same importance, NO tax dollar support
MISSION 4: Basic Skills Instruction		
27 Basic skills instruction for academic, life-survival or GED purposes.	greater importance, greater tax dollar support	not an issue
MISSION 5: Program Related Student Activities		
59 Sponsorship of student government, publications and other activities.	greater importance, NO tax dollar support	not an issue
MISSION 6: Credit Courses for High School Students		
28 Credit Courses and Programs in occupational areas offered to high school students as part of their educational program.	same importance NO tax dollar support	not an issue
MISSION 7: Credit Courses for Handicapped Students		
22 Instruction in basic skills to mentally handicapped students.	greater importance, greater tax dollar support	not an issue
49 Hands-on skills training to mentally handicapped students.	greater importance, greater tax dollar support	not an issue
MISSION 8: General Interest Courses and Activities for Seniors and Others		
32 Courses and workshops in practical life skills such as health, nutrition and consumer education.	not an issue	greater importance, NO tax dollar support
36 Credit courses and programs at such easy to reach locations as shopping centers, libraries and other public facilities.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
40 Short term skills training in small appliance repair, tax preparation, investment counseling to senior citizens and others.	not an issue	greater importance, NO tax dollar support
43 Courses and workshops in social and current issues.	not an issue	less importance, NO tax dollar support

Missions & Activities	Strategic Groups' Opinions vs. Administrators	
	MCCD	CAC
MISSION 9: Credit Courses for Non-High School Graduates		
12 Credit Courses in arts and sciences, health, engineering, agriculture business and other academic areas.	NO importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
50 Credit courses and programs in business, public service, agriculture, technologies, health services and other occupational areas.	less importance, NO tax tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax tax dollar support
MISSION 10: Special Services for Minority Groups		
5 Special support groups, counseling and tutoring services for ethnic and racial minority groups.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
11 Courses and programs to Indians on Indian reservations.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
26 Scholarships and other financial assistance to minorities, disadvantaged and other students.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, greater tax dollar support
42 Special tutoring and counseling for non-native English speakers.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
MISSION 11: Facilities and Services for Community and Business Groups		
8 Access to facilities, such as meeting rooms by local community groups.	not an issue	same importance, NO tax dollar support
10 Assistance to state and local government agencies, chambers of commerce, and other local community groups in attracting business, industrial and residential development.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
MISSION 12: Facilities and Services for Non-Residents of the Local Community		
37 Provide housing referral assistance.	not an issue	same importance, NO tax dollar support
UNCLASSIFIED ACTIVITIES		
16 Credit courses and programs to inmates of correctional institutions.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
18 Credit courses and programs offered by alternative instructional means such as television.	not an issue	greater importance, NO tax dollar support
41 Counseling and advisement services to students.	not an issue	greater importance, greater tax dollar support
44 Special tutoring and counseling to students with limited reading and writing ability.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
56 Instruction in study skills and academic survival skills to students unfamiliar with college work.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less important, less tax dollar support
57 Credit courses and programs to employees of public agencies and business at the work site.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	less importance, NO tax dollar support
46 Special support services and groups for women returning to the work force.	less importance, NO tax dollar support	not an issue

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Mission 2: Entry-Level Vocational

Urban strategic constituencies gave less importance than administrators to **credit courses and programs in hospitality services.** They also registered opposition to the use of tax dollars for this purpose.

Mission 3: Special Services and Programs for High Ability Students

Strategic constituencies in both college districts gave higher priority in the use of tax dollars to **scholarships and financial assistance for students of high academic ability**. Support of this activity increased in direct proportion to the distance of the respondent from a university campus.

Mission 4: Basic Skills Instruction

Strategic groups for Maricopa County gave greater importance as well as tax support to **basic skills instruction for academic, occupational, life-survival or GED purposes.**

Mission 5: Program Related Student Activities

Urban strategic constituencies considered **sponsorship of student government, publications and other activities** of greater importance than administrators. However, they were less willing to fund these activities with tax dollars than were administrators. These activities were not an issue for Central.

Mission 6: Credit Courses for High School Students

While constituencies for Maricopa County agreed with administrators on the importance of **credit courses and programs in occupational areas offered to high school students as part of their educational program**, they disagreed about using tax dollars to support such courses. Rural constituencies in contrast supported both the importance and tax funding for such courses. These findings may reflect strategic group perceptions that greater resources are available for high schools in an urban area limiting the range of services it is necessary for community colleges to perform.

Mission 7: Credit Courses for Handicapped Students

Both rural and urban strategic constituencies give greater emphasis to the importance and tax dollar support for this mission than did administrators. Two activities defining this mission are **instruction in basic skills to mentally handicapped students**, and **hands-on-skills training to mentally handicapped students**. Administrators in the rural area were more favorably disposed to the development of such activities than were their counterparts in the urban area.

Mission 8: General Interest Courses and Activities for Seniors and Others

While strategic constituencies were supportive of some importance and tax dollars being assigned to some activities, they attached little importance to **credit courses and programs at such easy to reach locations as shopping centers, libraries, and other public facilities** and were opposed to the use of tax dollars to support them. Administrators in contrast were quite supportive of these activities.

Mission 9: Credit Courses for Non-High School Graduates

In contrast to the priorities of administrators in both districts, strategic groups were opposed to provid-

ing tax support for credit courses and programs in **academic or occupational areas and to students without the GED or high school diploma**. Neither did they regard such services as important.

Interestingly, the attitudes of strategic groups while appearing to reject the "salvage" function traditionally associated with community colleges accurately reflected available research evidence indicating students without the GED are the highest risk of all categories of students who use community colleges.

Mission 10: Special Services for Minority Groups

Strategic groups attach some importance to special support groups and services for ethnic and racial minority groups, **special tutoring or counseling of non-native English speakers and programs for Indians on Indian reservations**; but, oppose the use of tax dollars for these purposes. For Central, the strategic groups were less resistant to **providing scholarships and financial assistance to minorities**. However, counseling and support services made available to **all** students rather than exclusively for minorities was strongly supported.

Mission 11: Facilities and Services for Community and Business Groups

Both Maricopa and Central administrators disagreed with their strategic groups about the importance of **assistance to state and local government agencies, chambers of commerce and other local community groups in attracting business, industrial and residential development.** While the strategic groups did not feel that tax dollars should be used to support these activities, they were not opposed to having colleges cooperate with such efforts.

In contrast to their strategic groups, **Central administrators felt that access to facilities such as meeting rooms for businesses and other profit making organizations should be subsidized.** Strategic groups appeared to be saying that profit making organizations should pay a fair price for any publicly supported services they receive.

Mission 12: Facilities and Services for Non-residents of the Local Community

Students at Central have the option of using campus residence halls. Strategic groups were more resistant than Central administrators to the use of tax dollars for **housing referral services.** The most interesting aspect of this difference is the additional example it provides of the sensitivity of external groups to issues involving possible duplication of public services.

Unclassified Activities

Four important differences for this category of activities were common to both Maricopa and Central: **credit courses and programs to employees at their work site; to inmates of correctional institutions; special tutoring and counseling to students with limited reading and writing ability**; and, **instruction in study skills and academic survival skills to students unfamiliar with college work.**

Administrators support funding for credit courses at the work site while strategic groups are opposed in keeping with previous attitudes toward activities involving special treatment for citizens or where possible duplication of services is involved. Similarly, strategic groups did not support use of tax monies to provide **credit and occupational courses to inmates of correctional facilities.**

While strategic groups with administrators did not deny the importance of education for inmates they clearly do not wish to pay for it with tax dollars. Also consistent with earlier opinions about college work by non-high school graduates, the strategic groups at both colleges resist public funding or special tutoring to students with limited reading and writing skills. Only at Central was there marginal support for public funding for **study and academic survival skills to students unfamiliar with college work.**

At Central, while strategic groups and administrators agreed about the importance of **providing alternative instructional approaches such as television**, external groups rejected use of tax dollars for these purposes. Views in the Maricopa district were similar but the divergence of opinions was not as great.

Also having implications for Central were differences involving counseling and advisement services **for personal and academic problems.** Strategic groups ranked this activity high in priority and were willing to commit the use of tax dollars. Administrators gave substantially lower priority to such services.

Strategic groups in Maricopa County differed with administrators on the importance and use of public funds for **services and support groups for women returning to the work force**. Administrators supported this activity but their strategic groups did not.

In contrast, the rural strategic group supported use of tax dollars for this activity. The greater support in the rural district may be related to the absence of alternative agencies available to assist returning women as noted for several mission categories previously discussed.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to determine levels of strategic group support under the assumption that identifying activities for which strategic group support is lacking, enhances the community college efforts to plan strategically. In the interests of brevity, we have omitted the majority of the activities on which administrators and their strategic constituencies agreed. The rank order correlation of priorities for Central Arizona was .54, for Maricopa the comparable figure was .59. These correlations suggest agreement is more the rule than the exception.

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